

either to demolish the wall; or if it resists and it is stronger than our forces, to examine it closely, refining and perfecting our knowledge of the obstacle which is opposed to our desire to go forward. And if our natural desire for radical and ultimate knowledge is not satisfied with the second way, we give it, at least, partial acquiescence in accordance with our capacities and we perform the ethical command: Know as much as you can.

Indeed there is in us, as spiritual persons, in addition to a pressing anxiety of knowing a moral imperative which obliges us to know. The values would be in our environment a neutral field, a heaven of cool constellations in which sometimes we should have joy and delight, and other times, we should disregard, if there did not exist, imperiously, the moral claim of ruling us by the value, realizing the positive value, preferring always the value of higher hierarchy to the lower one, when they challenge us in the same situation. And this ethical claim points to preference of knowing to ignorance, of truth to error. In its main lines, the very methodological logic is pure knowing and not, as it is often said, a body of technical principles and resources.

The usual theme of logic: the concept, the judgment, the logic principles, have been studied by Romero and Pucciarelli with accuracy and depths, following the preceding lines.

Romero and Pucciarelli's *Lógica* has become one of the most popular philosophical books in Latin America. Its success is due precisely to the merit already cited. Because to present with clearness and keenness the hard problems of logic implies a mastery that few scholars are capable of achieving. Romero and Pucciarelli have reached their goal satisfactorily, in an eager manner, not having to sacrifice the natural complexity of logical problems in favor of a simple and perspicuous language.

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Recent Kierkegaard Literature.¹ By Karl Löwith.

The translation of the works of Kierkegaard into English by W. Lowrie and D. F. Swenson will soon be complete. It took, however, about one hundred years to discover Kierkegaard. He became alive only long after his death. Like most of the great men Kierkegaard was fully aware of the

¹ *Fear and Trembling*. By S. Kierkegaard. Translated by Walter Lowrie. Princeton University Press, 1941. Pp. xxix, 209.

Repetition. By S. Kierkegaard. Translated by Walter Lowrie. Princeton University Press, 1941. Pp. xlii, 212.

Philosophical Fragments. By S. Kierkegaard. Translated by David F. Swenson. Princeton University Press. 1936. Pp. xxx, 105.

disproportion between his actual insignificance and his potential influence. He wrote in his Journals: "I do not complain though it might seem a sad fate, that I, who would have earned a large fortune in any other country and have been considered a genius of the first rank with far-reaching influence, that I, having been born in a provincial town quite naturally became a sort of village idiot." And yet, this "village idiot" was the only great contemporary and antipode of Karl Marx and together with him the greatest opponent and pupil of Hegel.

If Kierkegaard's works are now translated into German, French, and English there must be something in them which appeals despite this particular intellectual setting and also despite the efforts which they demand. It is the common climate of crises and catastrophe, in particular the crisis of Christianity, by which Kierkegaard may appeal also to those who have no interest in his theology and no sense for his ironic brilliancy and intellectual virtuosity. Like Marx and Nietzsche he was a most radical "corrective" of his age, i.e., of our Bourgeois-Christian civilization. In a bibliographical essay (*Repetition*, pp. 177 ff.), W. Lowrie told "How Kierkegaard got into English." In his last work about Kierkegaard Mr. Lowrie asserts emphatically that Kierkegaard was "a humanist as well as a Biblicist." I think Kierkegaard was neither the one nor the other. Of course, he possesses and displays a profound knowledge of both the Classics and of the Bible, but what distinguishes him from all Humanists and Biblicists is exactly that he lived "on the borderline of a poetical and religious existence," fighting against Humanism as well as against Biblicism. His starting point was Irony, and his conclusion a violent attack on established Christendom where Christianity is absorbed in humanity. His Christian attack on traditional Christendom is as devastating as the anti-Christian attack of Feuerbach and Marx, B. Bauer and Nietzsche. Only the forthcoming publication of his last writings will reveal the whole position of Kierkegaard.

The best English introductions to Kierkegaard are the first two essays

Stages on Life's Way. By S. Kierkegaard. Translated by Walter Lowrie. Princeton University Press, 1940. Pp. vi, 472.

Thoughts on Crucial Situations in Human Life. By S. Kierkegaard¹. Translated by David F. Swenson. Augsburg Publishing House, 1941. Pp. 115.

Concluding Unscientific Postscript. By S. Kierkegaard. Translated by David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie. Princeton University Press, 1941. Pp. xxi, 579.

The Sickness unto Death. By S. Kierkegaard. Translated by Walter Lowrie, Princeton University Press, 1941. Pp. xix, 231.

Something About Kierkegaard. By David F. Swenson. Augsburg Publishing House, 1941. Pp. 173.

The Terrible Crystal. Studies in Kierkegaard and Modern Christianity. By M. Channing-Pearce. Oxford University Press, 1941. Pp. xvii, 233.

in D. F. Swenson's *Something about Kierkegaard*, and the first and last essay in M. Chaning-Pearce's *The Terrible Crystal*. Both are aware that Kierkegaard's thought is not a new fashionable theology or philosophy of religion, but a disturbing factor in modern Christianity, accentuating life paradoxically and driving it to its maximum of possible earnestness of decision.

In *Fear and Trembling* faith is depicted as a major human passion, affecting daily life at every point, its content being the reality of the individual's existence. Faith is heroic and absurd, for it transcends the calculations of worldly wisdom. It implies an infinite resignation with respect to finite goods. Only after such resignation the religious existence lives again in the finite, but in virtue of an absolute relation to the Absolute or Eternal. The main theme, which stands for Kierkegaard's own act of renunciation, is Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac.

Other aspects of faith are dealt with in *Repetition*. When Abraham has everything restored to him after he has renounced and lost it, that is a "repetition." Its religious meaning is atonement. In contradistinction to the eternal recurrences as occurring in Nature, human history does not know any natural repetition. Spiritual repetition means rebirth to a new life through a progressive remembrance. Repetition is in so far the reverse of what the Greeks conceived as "anamnesis" or recollection.

The Philosophical Fragments present in an abbreviated form the logic of Christianity without naming Christianity itself. It is a study of the contrast between the highest type of religious immanentism, i.e., paganism, and Christianity, elaborating once more the original starting point of Kierkegaard's whole thinking: the decisive discrimination between Socrates and Jesus Christ. Paganism, which assumes that the condition for recovering the truth is imminent in man, cannot understand the necessity whereby God bestows the condition. The real teacher of existential truth must be a Savior, because the root of our errors is not lack of wisdom but sin, which cannot be overcome by mere will, though it originates in a free choice and decision.

Stages on Life's Way recapitulates *Either-Or*, delineating typical psychological attitudes and situations that are transitional toward the religious life: away from the immediacy of the aesthetic life, through the ethical responsibility and reflection, toward the religious life. This transition, however, requires a passionate resolution, a breach of continuity, even a "leap" from despair into faith. Mapping out the emotional possibilities Kierkegaard shows that the irrational life of feelings, moods, and passions has its own kind of coherence and structure which can be clarified systematically. In the personal center of the system of passions, which possibly have religious significance, stands the analysis of reflective melancholy and a strange story of suffering. For suffering is a decisive category

for the religious life, just as enjoyment for the aesthetic life. Enjoyment culminates in the happy moment, the ethical life believes in gradual progress toward perfection, religious life measures the temporal by an eternal standard.

Compared with the highly sophisticated essays in the *Stages*, *The Thoughts on Crucial Situations in Human Life* give a more simplified illustration of Kierkegaard's religious categories. This volume contains three discourses in devotional style, (1) What it means to seek God, (2) Love conquers All, (3) The decisiveness of Death. *The Concluding Unscientific Postscript* expands on a deeper level the problem of the *Fragments*: the true relation between the "disciple" and the "teacher" or how can I become a Christian and ground eternal happiness on a historic fact. The problem is paramount for the very reason that Christianity has so much thinned out in the course of its history that we live now in the illusion to be Christians. Once Christianity was foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling block to the Jews, and now—says Kierkegaard—it is humanity, decency, and civilization! Hence Kierkegaard's task: "to introduce Christianity into Christendom." To become a Christian demands a radical commitment of the self. Faith is not so much determined by what I believe (objectively) but how I believe (subjectively), i.e., by trust, risk, and decision—in the face of the common sense as well as in the face of the most comprehensive form of speculative wisdom (Hegel). Genuine faith protests against every modern attempt to dissolve Christianity into scientific, humanistic, moralistic, or pragmatic terms.

More directly concerned with introducing Christianity into Christendom is the *Sickness unto Death* which is perhaps the most consistent of his works. The fundamental sickness of man is despair, a disease of the spirit or self. Man falls in despair whenever his self is alienated from its eternal ground. The two fundamental ways of conscious despair are: (1) despair at not willing to be oneself, and (2) despair at willing to be oneself. The first is a despair of weakness, the latter of defiance. It may lead to great, though desperate undertakings, to passionate sensuality, to madness and suicide, but also to faith in God as the eternal ground of one's self, while in despair man wishes to be someone else. Interpreted on a theological level despair reveals itself as sin, caused by a defiant will, an active rebellion against the power on which the self is grounded.

It is difficult to understand Kierkegaard's ambiguous attitude toward Christianity: attacking its present reality (as a "working" religion) by defending its rigorous meaning. It is in particular difficult for American Protestants; for the actual strength of their churches lies just in that which Kierkegaard rejects: in the social aspect, promoted by a "religious education" which is to ninety-nine per cent not religious but simply education to

"social responsibilities" on a secular pattern. To the average American student who believes in what is called being "adjusted," "sound," and "decent," Kierkegaard must be repellent, for he was certainly very badly adjusted, deeply unsound, and even indecent. Introduced into the average church-activities Kierkegaard would become dynamite. There is, however, a cheap device to escape the dangerous explosive in Kierkegaard's thought: one can take him as "stimulating." If Kierkegaard is accepted only as stimulating, apart from his deeper implications, then O. Kraushaar may be right when he says in his review (*Journal of Philosophy*, October, 1942) that the honeymoon is certain to be brief. On the other side there is a distinct possibility for Kierkegaard's influence, for a recollection of the basic principle of Christianity. This will become apparent when we realize that the conventionally Christian habit of mind has suffered the corrosion of three centuries of liberalism, and that the final break-up of the Victorian age is inevitable. The language and outlook upon life, where to be a Christian was practically the same as to be a gentleman and to live in a civilized world, became a foreign tongue. In this atmosphere the radical distinction between Greek wisdom and Christian faith by men like Kierkegaard and Nietzsche may restore once more the original condition of Christianity to its true significance.

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The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino. By Paul Oskar Kristeller. New York, Columbia University Press, 1943. Pp. xiv, 441.

This authoritative work on Marsilio Ficino, central figure of the Platonic Academy in fifteenth century Florence, is the product of a long and faithful study. Dr. Kristeller published in Italy in 1937 a *Supplementum Ficinianum*, comprising those extant writings of Ficino which were not included in the sixteenth century Basle edition, and also established the chronology of Ficino's writings. The present volume was written in German in 1937 and an Italian edition was prepared the following year, but its publication was interrupted by the war. The English version, which is number six in the Columbia Studies in Philosophy, includes a revised bibliography and an all too brief account of Ficino's intellectual background, written for the benefit of American readers.

In 1462 Cosimo de' Medici presented Ficino a villa near Florence, so that Ficino might devote his life to the study and propagation of Platonism. The result was a series of translations of Plato, Plotinus, and other Neo-Platonists; a group of commentaries and letters; and a large number of treatises, the most important of which were the *Theologica Platonica* and